

MUSEUM NEWS

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ELIZABETH I (1533-1603)

ARTIST UNKNOWN c. 1585-90

GIFT OF EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY, 1953

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

A PORTRAIT OF THE FIRST ELIZABETH

"NEXT CAME THE QUEEN, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, as we were told, very majestic . . . She had in her hair two pearls with very rich drops; she wore false hair and that red; her bosom was uncovered, as all the English ladies have it till they marry; and she had a necklace of exceeding fine jewels; her hands were small, her fingers long, and her stature neither tall nor low; her air was stately, her manner of speaking mild and obliging. That day she was dressed in white silk bordered with pearls the size of a bean . . ."

So wrote the German traveler Hentzner in 1598 after being received by the Queen at a court ceremonial. Her rich dress on that occasion must have differed only in details from the one shown in a portrait recently acquired by the Museum.¹

Despite Hans Holbein's having produced the finest works of his maturity at the court of her father Henry VIII, Elizabeth did not favor the sculptural treatment of the human form with its use of light and shadows. Her own views were explicit and close enough to those of her subjects so that they were for the most part content to follow her lead. The great miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard, perhaps the only important native-born painter of his time, recorded the Queen's statement that "the Italians who had the name to be cunningest and to drawe best, shadowed not." She chose to have her sitting "in the open ally of a goodly garden, where not tree was neere, nor any shadowe at all . . ." Her mention of the Italians in this respect is rather curious, as by her reign the southern Renaissance had spread abroad the artistic devices which she opposed. The royal preference was for a rather archaic and image-like portrait which could display to advantage the brilliant colors and bewildering patterns of her finery and might serve to minimize the fact that she was by no means a beautiful woman.

None other than portraitists found work in England, as patrons there looked on pictures as a kind of furniture or embellishment which might serve to remind them of family wealth or nobility. During Elizabeth's reign painters in England were largely Flemish artists of minor importance who, with assistants, turned out the stiff and rather impersonal costume pieces which were the average of the time. The native artistic genius was turned to the creation of a golden age of poetry, drama and music, and there were notable if sometimes stylistically confused achievements in architecture, tomb sculpture, silversmithing,

embroidery and furniture making. Overseas, bold adventurers were laying the foundations of naval and commercial supremacy, and the wealth they brought home enabled the arts to flourish.

Surrounded by the most brilliant individuals of an age rich in genius, Gloriana, the Virgin Queen, dominated men with masculine force of character. Her womanly impulses included a vanity which rejoiced in fantastic and splendid dress. So spectacular was the royal wardrobe that the entire palace of Richmond was filled with the overflow and it was regularly viewed there by visitors from abroad as one of the sights of the land. No dress was ever cast off and it was recorded that at her death she owned some three thousand gowns of all nations, several hundred wigs and countless boxes of jewelry, trinkets and fans.

Our portrait shows the Queen at the most harmonious period of Elizabethan fashion before she resorted to extremes of ostentation to disguise her aging charms. The Spanish mode had long held sway in all Europe and it still prevailed at the time of the Armada when this portrait was probably made. The reddish wig is dressed over a pearl studded wire frame in two horn-like masses. The magnificent, pearl garnished lace ruff parts at the throat to display a low neckline, a symbol of the virginity cherished by the Queen. More pearls, of which she was especially fond, adorn the edges of the skirt and undersleeves (seen at the crook of the right elbow), the delicate choker necklace, brooches and the enameled and jewelled fan which is shaped like a tulip and holds a sheaf of ostrich feathers. The white satin dress displays the embroidery which was a special English glory. The design is of lilies, primroses and strawberries, enriched with pearls and set in a geometrical framing of 'strapwork', a kind of ornament which came from the Low Countries and Germany through engravings and pattern books and was used by stone and metal workers as well. The long V-shaped bodice and skirt which were designed with little attention to comfort of the curves of female anatomy, were together known as the kirtle. They might match the sleeves and the skirt could have a panel of contrasting embroidery set in its front as seems to be the case in our portrait. The skirt is extended at the sides by the farthingale, a petticoat covered structure of framework or padding. This bulging shape, which assumed bizarre proportions in its later models, disappeared after

about 1625, but it reappeared with variations in the eighteenth century and again in Victorian times. The exaggerations of the ruff were made possible by the introduction of starch in 1565, and ladies of wealth paid handsomely to learn this mysterious art. The writings of the time are full of references to the tragedies suffered by men and women when ruffs collapsed in the rain and the difficulties of making love with these grotesque collars. Extravagance of dress so pauperized many who spent all to follow the latest whim and bedazzle rivals with proof of riches, that royal sumptuary laws were issued to save fools from their folly, but the Queen herself led the glittering throng and these edicts had small effect.

At the upper left corner of the portrait is inscribed 'by Mark Gerard.' The writing appears to date from the 18th century and to be an English form of Marcus Geerhaerds, the name of two Flemish painters, father and son, who worked in England from about 1566 to 1635. It is extremely risky to give attributions of authorship to most Tudor portraits because of the rarity of authentically signed works and the sparse

knowledge of the life and operations of these men. For the most part, artists in Elizabethan Britain are dim and shadowy figures, but with the rise of amateur connoisseurship after 1700 there was a tendency to attribute portraits of this type to three or four well known names without regard for known facts. The Queen's face seems to be closest in general type to the 'Armada Portrait,' by an unknown artist, which seems to be a woman some 55 years of age, while her dress is of the period 1585-90. This may be explained both by the Queen's anxiety to hide her age and her prejudice against being painted or 'limned' from life. The result was that the portraits and miniatures which were distributed as marks of particular favor were based on a few prototypes. The execution of royal portraits was tightly controlled and there was a strict order that no two should show the Queen in the same costume. The aim seems to have been to present a gorgeously arrayed image of majesty which might serve to remind her subjects that a strong hand ruled.

1 53.94; H. 30" W. 25"; oil on canvas.
Ex coll: Tollemache, Peckforton Castle, Cheshire.
Exhib: Manchester, Art Treasures, 1857, No. 63.

ART AND MUSIC CLASSES FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. is registration day for adult classes in art and music. All classes will meet for the first time during the week of September 14.

Thirty-three classes for adults will be offered during the fall term. Beginning students will find a wide variety of classes — drawing, painting, crafts, sculpture, ceramics, home furnishings, art and music appreciation.

A special class in basic design is offered for people with an interest in art, but little background for understanding or making works of art. The first half year is planned primarily in terms of painting — mixing paint, using color, and understanding composition. The second half year emphasizes design as it contributes to everyday living.

"Art and the World Around Us" is a new class in art appreciation in which great works of art will be studied in relation to the general cultural achievements of the periods in which they were created. Emphasis will be placed also on understanding contemporary art, its place in our lives, and its relation to the music and literature of the twentieth century.

Those who have finished beginning classes will be able to continue with more advanced study in most areas. During the past year students in second year and advanced drawing have done some work with woodblock printing, lithography and etching, which will be continued through the coming year.

Children's Saturday classes will begin on September 12, which is registration day. All children's activities are free.

Any child in fourth grade or higher may register for Saturday art classes. These classes are of a general nature, based on the elements of drawing, painting, and design. Visits to the galleries are planned so that youngsters learn how artists of other times and countries have worked. In their own work, creative expression is encouraged at all times. The children work with a variety of materials in drawing and painting, as well as with clay, cut paper, and chalk. Advanced students are introduced to oil paints and water-colors.

A new program, "Art Museum Adventures" is planned for eight, nine, and ten year old children who want to become better acquainted

ADMISSION FREE AT ALL TIMES

OTHER DAYS, 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

HOLIDAYS, 1 - 5 P.M.

HOURS: SUNDAYS, MONDAYS, AND

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with the Museum. Each Saturday there will be a story in the galleries about some of the objects in the Museum collections.

Music classes for children include Music Appreciation Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, High School, and Elementary Theory for High School students. Children registered in these classes receive free tickets to all children's concerts held in the Museum.

For further information about any of the educational activities, or a bulletin containing a description of classes, telephone the Museum or stop in.

The Annual Museum School Exhibition will be on view from September 6 to the end of the month. This is an exhibition of work done by children and adults in classes during the past year. You are cordially invited to come and see what has been accomplished.

THE GALLERY 8 EXHIBITION for September, opening on September 13 and continuing to October 4 will present paintings by Carrol Lee Rice and metal work, ceramics, and prints by Winifred Clark. Both young women have been regular exhibitors in the Toledo Area Artists Annual.

THREE SUPERB CONCERTS are assured for the Gallery Series and a fourth may be announced shortly, as subscriptions come in to justify it. Subscribers voted to let a chamber orchestra count for two small groups and to keep prices as before: Adults \$5.00; Students \$2.50.
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